

ronments or deliver good design to many people at low costs would have been fun as well.

What was your best Eureka moment?

Four moments of interesting finds really have given me the goose pimples; The first was when we found the Polynesian Rat bones (*Rattus exulance*) in the earliest cultural layers at 'Anakena during the 1987 year excavation. The second was when we found ancient foot prints in the clay excavating at Tukume in northern Peru in 1989 and the third was when we found a complete *moai* eye in the storage at the Kon-Tiki museum that had been found in a cave and referred to as an oil lamp in the catalogue. The forth event was when I called up Paul in Samoa who was the acting field director in 2002, and he told me that he had found pottery at the Pulemelei site during the last day of the excavation. Another interesting moment has been when we in 1984 puzzled together a cranium from a woman buried in the court yard at a Megalith grave on Gotland and could see that she had been trepanated but had survived the operation.

What do you hope to accomplish (in archaeology) on Easter Island in the future?

I hope to be able to teach more about the fascinating discipline of archaeology to young Rapa Nui students and share my knowledge. I also hope to be able to carry on my project concerning views on Rapa Nui cultural identity in a long time perspective and get to the bottom of issues concerning chronology especially the initial colonisation and cultural affinities to the east and west of Rapa Nui. If possible also more research on the ceremonial sites.

What is your favorite Easter Island site and why?

'Orongo; the scenery is just un-believable but 'Anakena is also close to my heart since I spent many months excavating there

What myth or misinformation about Easter Island would you like to dispel?

The collapse theory where the Rapanui actually are pictured as poor sods destroying their own Island and then had to resort to eat away on each other. Colonial, political and religious factors have according to my opinion been far more destructive to the culture. I would also like to dispel that the "Aku Aku" expedition in the 50's "robbed" the island for many ancient remains. The majority of the cultural objects (the cave stones) that were taken from the Island by Heyerdahl were produced by Rapanui during the visit. It is really a two-way situation and it is true that the Easter Island exhibition at the Kon-Tiki Museum containing finds from Rapa Nui but this also attract tourists to know more about Rapa Nui and visit the Island. More concerning this theme can be seen in a special exhibition at the Museo Padre Sebastián Englert (see short communication by Olaug Andreassen in this issue).

What's the most important thing you'd like visitors (or scientists, for that matter) to know about Easter Island?

That we already in 1987 showed that Rapa Nui probably was settled from Polynesia between 1200-1000 years ago. When I have evaluated the dates and done further excavations of the *ahu* this will show that the ceremonial sites on Rapa Nui are earlier dated than other huge monuments in East Polynesia.

What advice would you give to a person interested in Easter Island archaeology or anthropology (or these fields generally)?

It is of vital importance that you have to have a good archaeological education and background and also the ability to study and interpret the data both on a specific and general level. Never forget that archaeology/anthropology is a matter of both theory and practice and that "fame and glory" is not recommend to be the thing you should seek when pursuing archaeology in this famous place.

What are you currently reading?

Since I have persuade myself to be on some kind of vacation for the moment, I'm currently reading a crime novel called Nobel's Last Will by the Swedish author Liza Marklund and also Utopia by Sir Thomas More written in 1516. Otherwise just finished evaluating a doctoral thesis and students assignments are lined up.

Date and place of birth?

I was born in the town of Norrköping East Sweden, a sunny day (19th) in March 1959.

REVIEWS

Beyond Horrible

A Review by Shawn McLaughlin

Blue Planet & Beyond

by Jeffrey T. Barbour

321 pages with 36 b/w photos and illustrations

ISBN 978-1-4116-7161-4 6"x9" hardcover

Golden Phoenix Publishing, Olympia, Washington

MOST RAPANUIPHILES WOULD LIKELY AGREE that there are two kinds of books published about our favorite island – those we're glad to have and those we wish we could, in the words of Nicholas Cage's character in *The Rock* (while describing VX nerve gas), "disinvent". Cage's character goes on to say the nerve gas is "very horrible". And this is, alas, the best way to describe Jeff Barbour's *Blue Planet & Beyond*. I'm not saying this to be mean-spirited but as a warning to prospective purchasers to save their money; there are far better researched, better written, and better printed books to be had. And as a warning to would-be "authors"... for the

love of Makemake, *please* do some real homework before putting pen to paper!

Before I delve into the book proper, I should note that, while *Blue Planet & Beyond* is published under the aegis of a “state registered, privately held multi-media publisher”, it is evidently a self-published work produced via a print-on-demand (POD) system. Though self-publishing is hardly new (any bibliophile can usually recite a litany of established writers who first gained notoriety after self-publishing; e.g., William Blake, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Thomas Paine, Edgar Allan Poe), POD is a much more recent development that takes advantage of digital pre-press technology to inexpensively and expediently enable anyone to publish and distribute his or her work without the encumbrances of dealing with a commercial publishing house. By itself, this doesn’t necessarily have to mean anything negative, though for many years self-published books (also known as “vanity press” works) carried a stigma because presumably any work deemed unmeritorious enough to escape the interest of a commercial publisher was thought by some to lack the requisite qualities to make it into the mainstream publishing market. But, over the years, the critical disregard for “vanity press” publications gave way to an underground movement predicated on the idea that sales were motivating publishers more than the desire to disseminate worthwhile books (how else can one explain the continuous proliferation of Harlequin romances?). There *is* an allure to this notion – that perhaps the “power brokers” in the publishing industry actually keep some of the good stuff from reaching the outside world because it isn’t deemed commercially viable. But now, with POD, anyone can produce a book. Which can be a good thing or a bad thing. In the case of *Blue Planet & Beyond* it is a bad thing.

There are so many problems with this book that it’s difficult to know where to begin, nor is there adequate space here to discuss them all so I’ll mention the most egregious or representative issues. First, there is the typesetting (and an odd dual-column format that really makes you want to scream; more on that below). The typesetter chose a large sans-serif typeface, which is technically easy to read if you’re vision-impaired but there’s no attempt at word- or letter-spacing, so there are hideous gaps and rivers of white space on every page (there are no hyphens used in the text at any of the margin zones), making reading a chore. Moreover, since people read serif typefaces with greater speed and accuracy than sans-serif counterparts, the choice of this typeface for an entire book is questionable at best – unless it’s to flesh out the body of the work because, even at the same point size, most sans-serif typefaces look larger and take up more overall space on the page than serif typefaces. By using more conventional typesetting, the current 321 pages would probably be reduced by a third and, presumably, this wouldn’t have made for a book justifying a \$35 price tag.

Then there is the dual-column layout. The author says he did this so that the discussion of Easter Island as a microcosm could be juxtaposed with “everything else” (which usually means lengthy, rambling discussions of astronomy, astrology, astronautics, evolution, plate tectonics, resource utilization, agriculture, mass extinctions, colonization of outer space, and

extraterrestrials). According to the Golden Phoenix Publications press release on *Blue Planet & Beyond* (the publisher’s first work), Barbour wrote the book “to give powerful voice to the need to re-align all aspects of human endeavor along two main lines: Ecological Sustainability, and Interstellar Space Colonization. This suggests to me that Barbour really had two highly ambitious books in mind but, perhaps being cost-conscious, he tried to combine them into one with the result that both sets of subjects are heavily compromised. The press release goes on to say that “readers develop a comprehensive understanding of all issues associated with Easter Island and planet Earth” – but this is hardly true or even possible given the hideous dual-column format. The sections don’t necessarily complement each other, the column widths and typefaces are different, but not different enough to be quickly distinguished, and thus one frequently tries to read from the bottom of one column to the top of the next only to realize the text continues onto another page. And sometimes the author doesn’t even adhere to the dual-column format – sometimes it’s there, sometimes not, and sometimes the right-hand and left-hand themes seem to switch. I’m not sure I can think of a more frustrating and incompetent way to compose type and content on a book page.

As for the book proper, things get off to a rocky start when Barbour explains his philosophy of scientific inquiry. Referring to one night long ago when he and his younger brother were looking at the stars, he says that his brother “... guided my eye to a very specific star. He said, ‘People live there’. I asked him how he knew. His response: ‘I thought it, therefore it must be true’”. And that’s pretty much *Blue Planet & Beyond*. (A pity this system doesn’t really work, otherwise I would have won the Powerball lottery years ago.) Though Barbour says in the “Forewords” [sic] that “The greatest challenge in *writing* this book was the need to keep gathering and assembling facts until all the needed parts fit together”, he doesn’t seem to have done much in this regard. Oh, he *read* a lot of material, just not the *right* material. The references section in the book, for example, lists 31 Web sites and just one book (Jared Diamond’s *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*) and, not too surprisingly, most of the Web sites about Easter Island incorporate inaccurate or out-dated information. Given the reliable resources available today – even on the EIF’s Web site – it’s nearly criminal that Barbour would compose what is probably 145,000 words based on so little.

The errors, misinformation, and peculiar presumptions start to pile up from the beginning. Barbour repeatedly refers to the Easter Islanders as “Henuans”, “Paseners”, and mostly “Maori” (which he explains in a notes section that he chose because he says he learned that “many Rapanui consider themselves Maori and prefer not to be thought of as Polynesian”). Though he could have consulted a few of the extant books dealing with the Rapanui language, he chose instead to use an online Maori-English dictionary and “had to make do with concocting English versions of place names myself based on lesser word forms”. A linguist Barbour is not. The results are a transliterated nightmare on virtually every page and I pity the fool who tries to extract anything useful from

this material (including two glossaries at the back of the book, though the one devoted to common words is more accurate than the one devoted to place names). The fact that Barbour refers to the “pueblo” of Hanga Roa speaks volumes about his understanding of linguistic distinctions and subtleties, especially when he asserts that he tries to be sensitive to Easter Island values.

Relying on what is in some cases obviously unreliable sources and equally unreliable reasoning, Barbour talks about the poor “Henuan success rate at getting a statue on base” [*ahu*], concludes that *moai* faced inland because “Henuans didn’t expect many visitors by sea”, that the Henuans “abandoned raising pigs to settle on a highly agricultural lifestyle”, that the “Birdman of the Year (*manutara* [sic; *tangata manu*])” jumped from the cliffs at Orongo, that stonework on Easter Island has no counterpart elsewhere in Polynesia, that the poor soil of Easter Island is due to a “lack of volcanic ash falling from distant volcanoes” (which Barbour says happens on “more northerly Polynesian islands”), and that the *moai* were probably toppled after the departure of the first Europeans but precisely *due to their arrival in the first place* (!) because their appearance represented a sea change (no pun intended) in the islanders’ world view. Barbour misunderstood a statement from the EIF Web site about indigenous plant species and draws erroneous conclusions about plants on the island today, he repeatedly uses the terms “archaeologist” and “anthropologist” erroneously or synonymously, and the list of errors and inconsistencies in typography, spelling, capitalization, italicization, and punctuation is seemingly endless. Even a rudimentary proof-reading would have helped immensely.

When it comes to the inevitable discussion of Heyerdahl’s defunct diffusionist theories, the author seems to vacillate between dismissing them and embracing them. At one point he says that “Supporting Heyerdahl ... was faith – not science. In making a religion of his beliefs, Heyerdahl would do what all true believers do – amplify those facts supporting his own ideological bent while deprecating evidence to the contrary”. Yet Barbour repeatedly mentions the usual list of “intriguing possibilities”, including the *Kon-Tiki* voyage; the presence of the sweet potato (though oddly enough Barbour acknowledges the likelihood that the Polynesians reached South America and brought the sweet potato to the Pacific in the first place); and the stonework at Vinapu (to which Barbour says the similarity between it and masonry in South America “suggests that others ... preceded [the original colonizers] on the island”; indeed, Barbour later says that, “While in Rapa Nui, it seemed to be a commonplace notion among Rapanui that the Maori were not the first people to dwell on the island” – a notion he later says that, while it’s based on myth, “does not need to be *true* to be *real*, whatever that means). It’s almost as if Barbour doesn’t realize which theories belong to whom – and maybe that’s true. Certainly he appears to lack any understanding of which theories are legitimate and which are not and this is in keeping with a recurring theme about maintaining an open mind and accepting the importance of relativism in archaeological pursuits. This is also in keeping with the principle that relativism is the first

bastion of the ignorant.

The last few chapters of the book are devoted to largely tedious lectures about the dangers of commercialization, greed, and unrestrained population growth – valid points for both Easter Island and Earth Island, to be sure, though Barbour undermines his own argument when he goes on to say that establishment of a casino on Easter Island “would make absolute sense – for one cultural layer after another has been imposed on the people since the island’s discovery. A casino would simply continue developments along this line and plot another point on the trajectory of the past”. Barbour provides a checklist of things people should do to save the planet (like voting intelligently, riding bicycles, etc.) but his dominant piece of advice – “read broadly” – is ironically something Barbour doesn’t do well himself, at least with regard to Easter Island. Given that Barbour concludes we have only two generations to get things right before it’s too late (there are numerous references to cycles, epochs and the like throughout the book, though not all of it substantiated by anything other than some kind of personal criteria), we’d all better get our affairs in order!

To round out the work, Barbour includes an appendix on lithopanspermia (a theory gaining acceptance which postulates the transfer of viable micro-organisms between planets as the result of natural impact processes from meteorites), but it doesn’t really seem to have much to do with the book, and an appendix on whether there is life elsewhere in the universe (where Barbour conjures up *ET: The Extraterrestrial*, questions of life on Mars, the dangers of anthropocentrism, SETI, and the *Star Wars* movies). There is no index, but 36 photos and illustrations are strewn throughout the book, most representative of the content and some better composed than others. However, unfortunately, they are often indistinct and of such high contrast (a trait typical in POD printing systems) that the darker shadow details are impossible to see. Strangely enough, the front and back covers and the frontispiece all use the same artwork – a slightly stylized nighttime scene at Rano Raraku with a full moon in the background.

I’ve tried to understand the inspiration for why Barbour (or anyone) would want to produce a book like this. After all Flenley & Bahn’s *Enigmas of Easter Island*, Georgia Lee’s *Uncommon Guide to Easter Island*, and even (with all due modesty) my *Complete Guide to Easter Island* address virtually all of the pertinent content Barbour has tried to conjure up – but with incalculably greater accuracy and reliability (to say nothing of keen aesthetics). It’s almost as if Barbour either knew nothing about other works or wasn’t interested in them, though the fact that he did online searches (and at least read Diamond’s *Collapse* – which, warts and all, admittedly covers the same territory) would tend to refute this. I also note that he seemed to rely rather heavily on islanders or possibly guides for his primary sources of information (during his December 2005 visit). I don’t mean to cast any aspersions on islanders who may have views that diverge from archaeological or anthropological or ethnological orthodoxy, but this kind of information should not be the sole source for a book – first, because there are at least other, peer-reviewed works to choose from that have tried to employ a multi-disciplinary

approach and should be consulted; second, because not all islanders, nor first-hand accounts, are necessarily accurate or without bias. During a visit to Ahu Akivi I personally overheard a guide explaining to the group of tourists in his charge that there was no such thing as a female *moai* and that the very concept had been introduced by missionaries to shame the islanders who, he asserted, would never, ever construct a *moai* with female features because it would be embarrassing and drain *mana* from the people. And need I mention the NPR broadcast in November of 2004 when producer Jack Chance related a story he'd been told by an islander about "white folks" who came to Easter Island to "baptize nonbelievers with hydrochloric acid"? As Routledge said, "It was even more difficult to collect facts from brains than out of stones ... it is particularly difficult to arrive at the truth from the untutored mind ... when memory was vague, there was a constant tendency to glide from what was remembered to what was imagined.... The information given in reply to questions is generally wildly mythical". I do not say this to question the veracity or legitimacy of Easter Islanders *per se* but to advocate the virtues of objective inquiry and evaluation before drawing any conclusions. And certainly before committing anything to paper.

Had Barbour tried to find an agent or established publisher (and he may well have), he should have discovered that either *Blue Planet & Beyond* contributes nothing new or that he would have been encouraged to do some thorough research so that his book was not only accurate but constituted a useful addition to the literature on the subject even if it covered similar territory as previous works. With a subject like Easter Island, where there's no shortage of nonsense still being written, it's disheartening to find another poorly written and sloppily researched book that lends nothing to the discussion about the island (or any microcosmic relationships to our planet) and, worse, needs much correction. I've never been one to put too much stock in reputation or credentials because these alone won't support a weak premise – but, in the absence of these, and especially with no consistent references to source material throughout most of the book, it comes down to being one very long opinion formed from sometimes disparate strands of fact, legend, myth, conjecture, and outright error.

The good news is *Blue Planet & Beyond* is available only through POD systems, which means it probably isn't likely to show up in bookstores or to garner a lot of attention. The Golden Phoenix Publishing press release about *Blue Planet & Beyond* says Barbour's next book, due this summer, is supposed to lead the reader "into unsuspected realms of esoteric thought and metaphysical adventure". Seems to me Barbour has already done this with his first book and, sadly, none of us – least of all Easter Island – is better for it.

The Sweet Potato in Oceania: A Reappraisal

Edited by Chris Ballard, Paula Brown, R. Michael Bourke
and Tracy Harwood, 2005

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Review by Scott Nicolay

I hope that the readers of this journal will not pass this volume over in the mistaken impression that its topic is an esoteric one, of interest only to ethnobotanists. The truth is that the study of the sweet potato cuts straight to the heart of some of the most important issues in Polynesian prehistory, especially for Rapa Nui. From which direction was Rapa Nui settled? What caused the unprecedented rise of the statue cult? Was there prehistoric contact between Polynesia and South America? All these questions lead back to the sweet potato, or *kumara* as it is known in Rapa Nui. The tuber that remains a novelty on the North American dining table has literally been at the center of life on Rapa Nui since time immemorial. The Rapanui people have a saying: "Here we begin at birth by eating sweet potatoes, then we go on eating sweet potatoes, and finally we die." (Metraux 1971:153). Though the world sees the *moai* as the symbol of Rapa Nui, the sweet potato has been of far more importance in their daily lives. Therefore, I believe that our readers will find much of interest in *The Sweet Potato in Oceania: A Reappraisal*, a volume that presents cutting edge research on the history and mystery of the *kumara* in the Pacific and with emphasis on Rapa Nui.

The original masterwork on this topic is Douglas Yen's: *The Sweet Potato and Oceania*, published by the Bishop Museum Press in 1974. Yen argued convincingly that the sweet potato could only have entered the Pacific via human agency. However, he identified three separate routes of transfer: one prehistoric (the *Kumara* line) and two historic (the *Kamote* and *Batatas* lines). Yen's monograph provided a foundation for all future study of the sweet potato in the Pacific, but it was not the final word on the topic. One of the most important questions that remained for future researchers to resolve was that of the human agents of sweet potato transfer: did they originate in Polynesia or South America? Another was the question of the sweet potato's arrival in Papua New Guinea, as all three lines of transfer converged there. Many other details of the process remained to be worked out as well. As Yen himself writes in the final chapter of the current volume, his original hypothesis is "more questioned than resolved." Now, more than 30 years later, a new generation of researchers has tackled these questions, building on Yen's foundation to address some of the most important questions in Pacific research, and to address the unique history of Rapa Nui itself. Like Yen's original monograph, the papers in the